

28. Cushioning beads according to claim 27, including at least 5% by weight of at least a biologically inactive pharmaceutically acceptable excipient dispersed throughout the said beads.

29. Cushioning beads according to claim 27, wherein the microcrystalline hydrocarbon wax or natural wax has a dynamic viscosity at 98.9°C (DIN 52007) greater than or equal to 2 mPa.s and/or a congealing point between 50°C and 90°C.

30. Cushioning beads according to claim 27, wherein the microcrystalline hydrocarbon wax or natural wax comprises a mixture of 30 to 90% by weight of linear hydrocarbons and 10 to 70% by weight of branched hydrocarbons.

31. Cushioning beads according to claim 27, wherein over 98% of the molecules of the microcrystalline hydrocarbon wax or natural wax have a molecular chain length ranging from 20 to 75 carbon atoms.

32. Cushioning beads according to claim 27, wherein the distribution of molecular chain lengths within the microcrystalline hydrocarbon wax or natural wax is such that less than 6% of the molecules have less than 25 carbon atoms, 6 to 50% of the molecules have 25 to 29 carbon atoms, 20 to 45% of the molecules have 30 to 34 carbon atoms and 7 to 70% of the molecules have at least 35 carbon atoms.

33. Cushioning beads according to claim 27, wherein the microcrystalline hydrocarbon wax is a product of catalytic polymerization of ethylene or copolymerization of ethylene with minor amounts of linear alpha-olefins having from 3 to 12 carbon atoms or maleic anhydride.

34. Cushioning beads according to claim 27, wherein the natural wax is selected from carnauba wax, candelilla wax, palm wax, lignite wax, ozokerite, lardaceine, ceresine wax and China wax.

35. Cushioning beads according to claim 27, wherein the wax comprises compounds selected from saturated hydrocarbons having from 25 to 31 carbon atoms, saturated alcohols having from 25 to 31 carbon atoms, saturated monocarboxylic acids having from 25 to 31 carbon atoms, esters obtained from the said alcohols and monocarboxylic acids and having from 50 to 62 carbon atoms, and their mixtures.

36. Cushioning beads according to claim 27, further including up to 70% by weight of another biologically inactive cushioning component or a biologically inactive pharmaceutically acceptable additive.

37. Cushioning beads according to claim 27, wherein the microcrystalline hydrocarbon wax or natural wax is water-insoluble.

38. Cushioning beads according to claim 27, having an average particle size of 0.5 to 2.0 mm.

39. A solid shaped article containing biologically active ingredient-loaded beads and further comprising biologically inactive cushioning beads comprising at least one compressible cushioning component consisting essentially of a microcrystalline hydrocarbon wax or a natural wax, the said wax being at least 30% by weight of the biologically inactive cushioning beads.

40. A solid shaped article according to claim 39, wherein a coating material is applied to the biologically active ingredient-loaded beads for controlling or sustaining the release properties of the biologically active ingredient or for taste masking or for imparting resistance to gastric fluid.

41. A solid shaped article according to claim 39, wherein the weight ratio of cushioning beads to biologically active ingredient-loaded beads is between 30:70 and 70:30.

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42. A solid shaped article according to claim 39, wherein the cushioning beads include at least 5% by weight of at least a biologically inactive pharmaceutically acceptable excipient dispersed throughout the said beads.

43. A solid shaped article according to claim 39, wherein over 98% of the molecules of the microcrystalline hydrocarbon wax or natural wax have a molecular chain length ranging from 20 to 75 carbon atoms.

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44. A method for treating a plant in need of a biological treatment or a mammal in need of a medication by bringing the said plant into contact with an efficient amount of a biologically active ingredient or by administering to said mammal an efficient amount of said medication containing a biologically active ingredient, wherein the said biologically active ingredient is in the form of a solid shaped article containing biologically active ingredient-loaded beads and further comprising biologically inactive cushioning beads comprising at least one compressible cushioning component consisting essentially of a microcrystalline hydrocarbon wax or a natural wax, the said wax being at least 30% by weight of the biologically inactive cushioning beads.

45. A method according to claim 44, wherein the weight ratio of cushioning beads to biologically active ingredient-loaded beads is between 30:70 and 70:30.

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46. A method according to claim 44, wherein the cushioning beads include at least 5% by weight of at least a biologically inactive pharmaceutically acceptable excipient dispersed throughout the said beads.